

Kramer-Witte Barn
County Route P, 6.5 miles south of
intersection with State Route 50
Owensville Vicinity
Gasconade County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-259

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

KRAMER-WITTE BARN

HABS No. MO-259

Location: County Route P 6.5 miles south of intersection with State Route 50, Owensville vicinity, Gasconade County, Missouri

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Ben Witte, RR 2, Owensville, Missouri

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Ben Witte. Barn, storage of equipment, hay, grain, and livestock shelter

Significance: The Kramer-Witte Barn (1860-65) is built at the base of a hill taking advantage of the slope to allow access on three levels. The barn is one of the few half timber farm buildings still in use in Gasconade County and is notable for its heavy framing, brick nogging, and patterned cobblestone threshing floor.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1860-65. Ludwig Kramer purchased the farm in 1856. By 1867, he owned two mules, one horse, thirteen cattle, fifteen sheep, and twenty-two hogs (County Tax Records), more than enough to necessitate a barn of this size.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Kramer-Witte Barn is built on part of the northwest quarter of the southeast of Section 3, Township 42, Range 6 west, Gasconade County, Missouri. The following references to the title of this land are recorded in the Gasconade County, Missouri Deed Books and Probate Records.

1856	Warranty Deed	Herman Keuper and Elizabeth his wife to Wilhelm (Ludwig) Kramer Property: part of NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of S 3 T 42 R 6W and other lands Date signed: May 30, 1856 Date filed: June 2, 1856 Date recorded: June 20, 1856 Book L Page 397 Consideration: \$1,550.00
1859	Quit-Claim Deed	Friedrick Kramer and Maria his wife to Ludwig and Arnold Kramer Property: part of NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of S 3 T 42 R 6W and other lands 264 acres Date signed: October 25, 1859

Date filed: December 9, 1859
Book N Pages 31 and 32
Consideration: \$400.00

1860 Warranty Deed James W. Cox and Mathilda his wife to Louis (Ludwig) Kramer
Property: A lot of ground ten feet square including the northeast spring situated and located near the northeast corner of the northwest quarter southeast quarter of S 3 T 42 R 6W
Date signed: April 11, 1860
Date filed: May 15, 1860
Date recorded: May 19, 1860
Book N Page 274
Consideration: \$1.00

1860 Last Will Estate of Arnold Kramer to Ludwig Kramer (brother)
Date signed: April 11, 1860
Date recorded: July, 1888
Box 35 Bundle 5 Paper 14

1880 Probate Records Estate of Ludwig Kramer to Henriette Kramer (wife)
Date of inventory: January 11, 1878
Date of final settlement: May 11, 1880
Box 16 Bundle 3 Paper 4

1891 Sheriff's Deed Kramer Heirs to Henry Witte
Date signed: July 27, 1891
Date filed: December 4, 1891
Book 15 Pages 564 and 565
Consideration: \$2,670.00

4. Original plans and construction: No original plans, early views, or written accounts of the construction of the Kramer-Witte Barn have been located. The original barn consisted of the central bay of the present building. It was expanded twice, first by the addition of the stall and hay storage area on the east end and then by the addition of a similar bay at the west end. Both these additions were made soon after the original barn was built. As the barn grew, it conformed to the slope of the hill upon which it was constructed. This allowed access on different levels much like the bank barns of southern Germany and Pennsylvania. The original section was half timber with brick nogging and clapboarded frame construction. It has a patterned cobblestone threshing floor. The stones are set in a herringbone design.
5. Alterations and additions: Shortly after the original barn was built, it was expanded by the addition of a bay at the eastern end. This bay is a continuation of the original brick nogged half timber construction.

The western bay was added after that on the east and is brick faced frame construction.

In 1905, the lean-to shed was added on the east end of the south wall.

The barn originally had a wood shingle roof. This has been replaced with a corrugated metal roof.

Poured concrete ramps replace the original wood and earth ramps leading to the threshing floor. They are imprinted with horseshoes to provide greater traction.

Two small semi-circular windows in the loft of the west end have been bricked in.

B. Historical Context:

Ludwig Kramer came to southern Gasconade County in 1856. Born in Prussia, he was by trade a shoemaker. Yet in the twenty years that he lived in the county, he became one of the area's most prosperous farmers. Probate records of his estate list several thousand dollars in loans to neighboring farmers indicating that his wealth was instrumental in building the county. Ludwig Kramer is buried on his farm in the family cemetery.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A massive, rectangular half-timbered building, constructed in the mid-Missouri vernacular of the mid-1800's.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair-poor.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 74'8" x 30'7"
2. Foundations: Continuous limestone walls
3. Wall construction: Typical German Fachwerkbau construction. Heavy wood sills rest upon the foundation walls, and the columns bear on them. Some of the panels are braced diagonally. Interstices between the timbers are filled with brick nogging. Girts are notched into the top beam, and the rafters are pegged to a sill which rests on the girts.
4. Structural system: Half-timbered or brick perimeter walls with interior wood columns.
5. Porches: None.

6. Chimneys: None
7. Openings: The barn displays an amazing array of openings (all unglazed) which punctuate the walls at irregular intervals, producing a rich variety of texture and form. Opening shapes range from rectangular and trapezoidal to semi-circular, and they are topped by squared log or board lintels or segmental or semicircular brick arches. The actions of weathering and replacement have altered most doors and shutters beyond recognition of their original conditions.
8. Roof: The main building is capped by a gable roof, covered by corrugated metal sheets. The lean-to has a shed roof which projects at a more shallow pitch from the main roof.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The main floor is divided into three distinct bays by the column system. Access is gained to the central bay through double wagon doors on the north and south walls. This space is undivided and was used for wagon storage and threshing. The central bay is flanked by two smaller bays to the east and west. These are divided into stalls and storage areas by columns and plank partitions. The east and west bays are covered by second story lofts; the central bay is open to the roof.
2. Stairways: Both lofts are reached by ladders.
3. Flooring: The central bay is floored with cobblestones set into the ground in a distinctive herringbone pattern which is interrupted every two feet by lines of stone running east-to-west.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls are either the unpainted and uncovered insides of the brick and half-timber perimeter walls or unpainted plank walls.
5. Doorways and doors: A peaked wood lintel caps the doorway which leads from the central bay to the west bay.
6. Decorative features: No interior trim.
7. Lighting: None
8. Heating: None

D. Description of Site:

1. General setting: The barn runs east-to-west on a farm which has changed little in overall appearance since its early days.
2. Outbuildings: The farm is populated with a variety of frame sheds, barns, privies, chicken coops and other outbuildings. Not strictly an outbuilding, the stone house, which dates back to the same period

as the barn, is another fine example of the mid-Missouri Germanic vernacular of the period.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary and unpublished sources:

County Tax Records, 1854, 1866-1900, stored in a vault on the second floor, Gasconade County Courthouse, East First between Market and Schiller Streets, Hermann, Missouri (key in the care of County Clerk)

Deeds, Office of the County Recorder, Gasconade County Courthouse, East First between Market and Schiller Streets, Hermann, Missouri

Probate Records, Office of the Probate Clerk, Gasconade County Courthouse, East First between Market and Schiller Streets, Hermann, Missouri

Interview, Mr. Ben Witte, July 22, 1975, order of construction, dates for additions

B. Secondary and published sources:

Arthur, Eric and Witney, Dudley, The Barn, a Vanishing Landmark in North America, (New York Graphic Soc. Ltd., Greenwich, Connecticut: 1972)

Prepared by: Nanette M. Linderer	and Clayton B. Fraser
Project Historian	Project Supervisor
Summer 1975	Summer 1975

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Hermann, Missouri, project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey, under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with cooperation of Historic Hermann, Incorporated. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1975 by Clayton B. Fraser (HABS Washington Office), Project Supervisor; Nanette M. Linderer (University of Missouri at Columbia), Project Historian; and Student Architects Edward C. Freeman (Arizona State University), Jean C. Parker (Columbia University), and Donnie G. Seale (University of Florida). The photographs were taken in April and May 1983, by HABS/HAER Photographer Jet Lowe.